CHRISTOPHER

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CHRISTOPHER

LIONEL JOSAPHARE

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CHRISTOPHER

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BOHANOC, the king.
EDAMIA, queen.
ATARAGON, daughter of Bohanoc and former queen; is a priestess.
SEBASTIAN, onetime pretender to the throne.
CHRISTOPHER, distant cousin of Bohanoc.
SIR JOHN, Christopher's tutor.
ABYMELIG, a blind man.
GREGORIUS, member of the palace guard.
WINIFRED, servant in Christopher's house.
BEELZEBUB, a negro slave.

ACT I. Scene 1. A roadside.

CHRISTOPHER *and* JOHN.

John. Gone, elegantly gone; yet gone. The sun
Is buried in the west. With pompous funeral
And colors bearing almost into music,
This bauble of the sky goes out. I say it
Upon mine honor, while to my discredit,
That hour by hour, patience relieving patience,
Like sentry taking weary sentry's watching,
Yourself, myself, remained here through all changes.
From the highest overhanging of the orb
In the pinnacle of day, then cloud to cloud
Unto its golden disappearance, we
Have lagged beneath, like drink-disabled louts,

Unfit to leave; and no Ataragon
Or princess found by any other name,
Has come to kiss us in desire, clap hands
With us in glee, or smite our faces
In woman's wrath for doubting her approach.
Chr. Here too my expectation held high noon;
Sets now in crimson and calamity.
Here do I sink in darkness.
John. I esteem
The fool intoxicated with his folly;
But him in stupor with expected sweets,
Drunken with emptiness and air—not I.
Chr. O idiot me! Despicable supplicant,
Whose drunken dreams and colored fantasies
He can suck from an empty bottle.
John. Furthermore—
Chr. Ah, now comes Furthermore.
John. The haunting truth,
Persistent and intolerable ghost,
Standing before thee till thou darest look.
Still, Christopher, he who reveals the truth
Is much reviled as if he had created it.
Chr. Such truth as now congeals within illusion
And points its finger sharply, would be null
And powerless to jeer me, were thy hand
As powerful as kind.
John. As optimist of heavenly movements, I
Foreboded that the sun, in the formalities
Of day, and punctually thereto, would set.
As pessimist of woman's promises,
The more particularly Ataragon's,
I had divined that this divinity,
According to her nature and performance,
Would not astonish thee by keeping her word.
Chr. Thou speakest well to one grown sick of speech.
John. Dost thou acknowledge that the sun hath set?
Chr. No, no! It is not set. Ataragon
Engaged her presence ere the set of sun.
She has not come; the sun has not yet gone.
John. Or, take my version of it; sun has gone;

Ataragon was here; has gone.
Chr. Perchance 'tis true.
So twisted, rankled are my thoughts, I know not
Whether or not I saw her.
John. Damned the woman
That has done this for thee! A host of curses
On her who in her devilish excess
Could bring damnation on a host of hells.
Chr. O master mine! Would that a roaring lion
And not thyself had told me this.
John. Softly!
Contrive; nor make me, who am not in love,
As mad as thee. Forgive this weak, old man
That he's dismayed in sight of thy disorder.
Oh, wert thou mad, I could weep moderately;
But seeing sanity in madman's chains
Is past all sane deploring. Wert thou mad,
Imagining thyself a king or demi-god,
I could admire the noble action of it;
But when thou crouchest like a nondescript,
Puling from sky to earth, peopling the sunlight
With nullities and nightmares of the moon,
The prodigy makes me a frenzied watchman.
Chr. With some incontrovertible breath or beauty,
She has blown madness in my face; brought me
To see within myself a wretch demented,
And that misguided monster to behold
A more disheveled maniac within him;
Even he to find still more preposterous inmate.
She's made me glory-gazer, penitent,
King, coward, slave, a medley of things human.
John. That is not lunacy; your head's become
A very madhouse for the lunatics.
Chr. With each of her bewildering antics came
Another madman.
John. What infernal wine
Must she dote on for drink, that, brain to brain,
She sends these false, mad, damned enormities.
All unforgettable and all as false
That should be never known.

Chr. How oft, in dire constraint, must I forget her
That still must I laboriously forget?
How oft must I perceive her falsity
Ere she stands false in my complete perception?
John. Earth which created mouths to tell such tale
And voices gasping with such thirsty sorrow,
Must hide somewhere a cup to solace it.
Chr. Ye buccaneers in ships of gold that sail
The grisly and amazing seas for plunder,
From some enraptured shore, where sorcery
Is common to alleviate the bosom
As here to send it pain, demand for me
A vial of consolation.
John. This outlandish boon
Is for a far-fetched need. 'Tis all unreal.
'Tis neither here nor there nor anywhere
Within yourself. 'Tis like Ataragon:
When she comes not, she's not, for the time being.
To thee not now, now she is not. She's naught
To thee. Why let that naught still make thee nothing?
Chr. But when this nothing holds that nothing near,
Then's all in all.
John. And I say thou art what thou art,
And always able, be she here or there.
Chr. 'Twixt here and there, wherever they may be,
My thoughts go hither thither. The uncertainty
Of her forthcoming and her goings forth
Have my thoughts never still.
John. Well then, it's that.
She who gives you uncertainty gives you
The worst thing in the world, for it presents
All other outrages. Be it then so.
Ataragon, by running up your score
Of evil thoughts, must, in her own devices,
Have that same score of evils for so doing.
Have we heard of Sebastian?
Chr. Burn Sebastian
Not near the blazes of my meditations.
John. Why is she not with you? The Why is where
She is.

Chr. The apprehension of that thing
More violent is than apprehended evil,
Which must be seen to be frightful. Comes a fear,
A deadly marvel, felt, invisible,
Which men call jealousy, and while disdaining
To own, are owned by it; unsightly venom,
With reptile body and a rival's head,
Touches the skin, and all our inward feels it.
Oh, that this precious tower, undermined,
Should tremble at the bite of such a worm.
John. When that worm crawls, 'tis on the corpse of love
Buried and nevermore to smile. Love cometh
With the gift of a flower. Such the symbol of it:
A flowerlike and fading ecstacy.
Of such same natural discontinuance
Is all that love and women give.
Chr. So might
With us, the flowers and the fragrance die,
The passion and the wonders pass, in vain,
With quietude increasing till despair
Has lost its desperation, but there comes
A vision more and more distinctive, grinning,
Of an ape that clasps in his lascivious mixtures
The angel of our sweeter lust.
John. And yet there's worse condition mingled with it:
That thou wouldst wed this disappointing princess,
Be husband of her curious absences,
And feed on those delinquencies forever.
Chr. I shall survive. My groans are shorter now.
John. Survive thou long enough, and thou shalt hear
Groans from each good and vicious fellow-man.
Chr. I do exult thereat, but not at length. My laughter
Snaps in the middle. Ha! Such sympathy,
Onlooking with a supercilious Ha!—
Or haply double note—Ha, ha; yet goes
Not thrice with ha, ha, ha in fluency.
John. Twice blest is he whose house of joy's beginning,
Can yet reserve a room for joyous end.
There, when the guest has gone, her memory
May sleep in sentiment, and, sleeping, dream

In repetition of those dancing hours
That else would rave in desperate finality.
For beauty is a wandering goddess, that
Slips from one lover to allure the next,
And him beguiles to signal with another.
Chr. How unimportant we become!
John. There is
A time she'll run to thee; a time she'll flee.
Her laughter's here and elsewhere; not all thine.
Chr. Oh, I could vomit up my soul for sorrow.
John. Break not abruptly so. Come! Christopher,
There is a princess of the lonely hills.
She hath a softer hand. True, 'tis not human;
Yet on the forehead slowly may it soothe
Him who has found the human touch too cruel.
Her breath contains no kiss; yet it may whisper
A tale of more prevailing fantasy,
With vaster contemplation and an air
To dim the multiplicities of man
Below; or, gaze thou on them and forgive.
In solitude awhile, seek thou the slopes.
Mayhap this airy love awaits you there.

ACT I. Scene 2. Before the Temple of Ataragon.

ABYMELIG *and* JOHN.

Abym. Yonder the rebel chief, now separate king,
Has camped his heroes, fierce, war-belching men,
That stink with the corruption of tomorrow.
John. How points your arm, with sightless eyes behind?
Abym. I feel the horizontal sun. The west
Is red in the sky, once known to me.
Beneath it flow the bloody purposes
Of this rebellion.
John. Here's war, a hideous patch for Christopher.
Abym. You came here yesterday?
John. Yesterday o'er the hill,
With daylight's coming.
Abym. You'll see some glory here, and on this field

Behold what you have read in books before.
John. Who are you, sir, that know these things?
Abym. I am a clown. The world's a laughing matter;
First laugh at it, and then you'll understand it.
It's comical, I tell you, comical,
When one's good fortune is to be a clown.
John. A clown? Why, sir, a clown, a clown,
I wot as some most captivating jack,
A loud, rebounding, skipping bladder of fun,
A loose-limbed, scarlet-tufted fellow;
And motley clowns are good, with smirk and smatter,
As clownish goes. But none of them wear black.
Abym. True, I'm in black. 'Tis mourning for the death
Of good comedians, your best philosophers.
There be some who debate on sorry stuff;
I perpetrate such deeds as make more laughing;
Hence, more comedians and philosophy.
John. A blind man's deeds! Methinks he goes
With prodding stick before him, thump, thump, thump;
And, cracking not his noddle, is content.
Abym. Deeds done by other men, who'll die adoing,
And make the world wear black, so I may be
In fashion.
John. Hm! Most egotistic!
I deem you, sir, unable for such crimes,
Lacking grace more than licking up dishonor.
How oft intrepid Fancy routs its foes,
And pushes murder down the hill of dreams.
Yet there shall be no war for Christopher;
He is too mild and unrelated to it.
Abym. You pedagogued him, did you?
John. Holding his hand,
I led his lovely infant wantonness
To boyhood' castles; the questioning boy,
To youth's romantic hillsides and the hunt;
His youth, to heroism in the practice
Of battles, governments and present manners.
Abym. Here is a government and manner of it:
Yon temple, Heaven's front, is now in danger;
Which tells that there is war 'twixt Heaven and Hell,

And every man of merit must engage
As angel or as devil. We, the Druids,
Will range the battle for our favorites.
John. Are there still Druids here?
Abym. Within these paths
Men still have wonder for the tree whose fruit
And fascination they did eat when Druids
Ruled in the forest.
John. But King Bohanoc
Worships the God that hath no other gods.
Abym. We may be slaves to what we do not worship.
So Bohanoc defends his daughter's temple.
John. War is excusable in avarice
Of what we see; the earth and coinage of it;
But slaying for the sake of the unseen,
Breaking heads in the interests of infinity,
Is vulgar motion toward resplendent Nature:
Rolling the eyes in the name of rolling daylight,
Frothing at mouth in honor of the clouds.
Abym. Hush! For Ataragon may hear your slander.
Hush! For her pride is a quick-tempered realm
Where unbelievers are not recognized
As having rights to their own heads. Knowest thou
Decapitation is a cure for pig-headedness?
John. Would I were citizen of some free air,
A green metropolis, taxed by only sun;
In daylight's pageantry distinct, and fearful
Of no more than the tempest's wild intrigues.
I hate death's guide-posts visible hereby.
Quick and impulsive am I for return
To fragrant sods, far from the towns; to die
'Neath Heaven's will, not man's impertinence.
Abym. In time of war there is no going hence,
Save home where spade is key.
John. Yet we will go,
If there was ever going in this country.
Abym. The world's at war, and has been since the time
There were two kings to hate each other.
John. Aye!
So let them hate unretinued with others

That love one king to hate the other's lovers.
Alas that man has dictum o'er man's life!
Here shall we lag no more. No, Christopher!
'Twas error lured him here to see the world,
When world he had, and this is sickness of it.
O read upon this door! (*They turn toward the Temple.*)
Abym. (*as if reading*). "Death welcomes him who comes unwelcome here."
Yea; it is death to pass the door unsummoned.

(*Enter* CHRISTOPHER *and two armed* COMRADES.)

John. Tarry not here, my son; we must return
Unto our studies and the natural fields.
This is too dark a place. The peace of kingdoms
Is too, too gashed with frights for your young soul
To meddle with.
Chr. Man will be meddlesome.
We have, like two flat figures in a book,
Lived in the parchment and the narrative.
Now from the page we spring, to gaze on scenes
Of thick reality. We have been shaded.
Now glows the sun of conflict in our eyes.
Let's dazzled be but not dismayed.
John. O Christopher,
How flushed, how changed, how grown calamitous
Near sudden danger and its dismal front!
As horror oft enchants the arms to clasp
That which the legs might well be fearful under.
Chr. There is a rat running through the universe,
Trailing o'er cheese and sentiment. I've seen
Marks of his feet: the rat's foot on the cake.
Sebastian's here. These men are trapping for him.
Upon the moment, rat and universe
Attract me not. I am alone today.
First Comrade. Ours is an errand benefitting all
Save one, Sebastian; and that vile "save one"
Is now within the temple and our way.
Abym. Avaunt! The busy ministers of death
Have nobler work than cutting your fool throats.

Ply them for no such workmanship.
S. Com. We too are workmen with a terrible stroke.
Rebellion's on the block. Sebastian is it
That must be done for first, or else he lives
In treason's last resort and refuge—loyalty.
Abym. He downed his own rebellion, and pretends
No more to the royal gear. As I know truth,
He's true. Ne'er was more honesty than this:
The new Sebastian bids farewell to the old.
Chr. The new Sebastian, like a wounded crow,
Hops from the scene, pecking hope's hollow grains.
The same Sebastian that pretended king
Would wed the princess and pretend the prince,
Pretend a lover and pretend my better.
Abym. He trades a hopeless cause for hope. Well traded!
John. This with Ataragon?
S. Com. Forsooth in the Pretender is a throne
To which this wondrous girl pretended long.
And long ago did she begin the match,
Wooing Sebastian in emergency,
Sending him love and rich conditions on it.
Abym. This is not in your scrutiny. Beware!
F. Com. I take no man's Beware.
S. Com. Beware is invitation to my hand.
Abym. Behind the temple doors, watchmen, whose eyes
Glitter eternally as the altar lights,
Seize the intruder, fasten him to judgment,
And penalty resounds upon the word.
John. Beware a moment, my strange gentlemen.
Let's heed this marvelous man. His head may be
The haunt of matters wrongful to our mind
Yet usual here.
Abym. The door is lettered. 'Tis a sentence passed
Upon those passing under. It is death.
John. What words are these! The secret of this place
Has taken root within my lively heart,
And filled my sky with its unflinching branches.
I do beseech you, friends, you'll heed this man.
Misfortune's here. Such prepossessions, boasts,
Professions, what they are, condign or null,

Quite overcome me. I know not the part,
Abymelig, you play in this.
Abym. I am,
Sir, as, in all true sadness, one might say,
A clown; and at my farce will worthy men
Yet laugh; or weep, I care not.
F. Com. Shall we go in and wait no more this row?
S. Com. I'll not turn back; alarms are now too late.
F. Com. Enter we then.
S. Com. Come, if you dare this door.
I'll in, though horror shake its nearest floor.

(*The door opens;* ATARAGON *appears.*)

Atar. Are you not filled with the warning overhead,
That you gaze in so greedily?
S. Com. We hunger for the treachery within.
Atar. Let me not hinder you.
(*Comrades enter temple.*)
Abym. Thy words, O princess, are yet things of power.
Atar. Peel praise off thy performance, and go in.
Abym. They came to kill Sebastian. (*Enters temple.*)
Chr. She sees me not, while all I ever saw
Is there to tell me that I've lost it all.
John. She will speak.
Chr. How like a wraith, too lightsome for thin raiment,
As from a superstitious climate grown,
She seems without earth's heavy element.
Her cheeks with dreams more than with life are hued,
For me, with dreams more than with life imbued.
Atar. Hast thou address for me?
Chr. To thee I once addressed my eternal soul.
Then didst thou leave me pleading and appalled.
No child was e'er more frightened in the night
Than I within the dark of lone desire.
I said "forget"; and, trying thus to starve
Amid the rage and plenties of remembrance,
Ever unto the loveliest smile returned,

Moaning the flavors of thy kiss, as if
My lips did long for the one purple cherry
Brilliantly hanging in a dingy world.
Atar. Thou'st fallen from the touches of our love,
Embraced dissension and embraved thy comrades
Against the life of him who loves us dearly.
Chr. Pardon, Ataragon, duty to the utmost
Has been in all my thoughts enduring here.
Atar. Yet the especial traits by which Sebastian
Should be confirmed as kindred are not in you.
Chr. Possessed with your divinities, you ignore
The widespread hate against Sebastian.
Your wedding music would as carnage be
Among the people's hearts.
Atar. And you commend his murder;
As to bereave me ere I have espoused;
Preventing widow's tears by emptying
The bridal eyes; avoiding widowhood
By slaying the hero.
Chr. My treason is disclaiming him called traitor
A month ago. My hatred for him goes
A month too far.
Atar. 'Tis never far from man to taunt a woman.
Chr. Yet least of crimes against her is to save
The mystery of her music from discordance,
Though she invited the curst thing's approach.
Atar. Explain thyself.
Chr. There are words pardonable
And words unpardonable. Therefore I
Exemption ask from further mention of it.
Atar. I am desirous for your answer to it.
Chr. My thoughts are sacred, erring though they be.
If not expressed, I hold them safe in me.
Atar. He who amazes and will not explain,
Has mouth for bubbles and froth for his brain.
Chr. Let me be that.
What I had thought was nothing; not a part
Of sense; to nonsense even poor relation.
Atar. Have done with nothing, and begin with something.
Chr. I should withhold it yet.

Atar. Still wreathing thy refusals?
What infamous fancy am I bending over?
Base lookings-in o'er what sebaceous pool
Is my beholding of your mind withheld?
Chr. There is a time when candor utterly stops
Before the listening precipice.
Atar. Holloa, my patience and extortion, ho!
Chr. What would you have me do?
Atar. Speak out! Adjure thee!
Chr. The woeful and unpardonable words
'Gainst woman is in declaration
That she did first put forth the affectionate hand,
Wooing the wooer ere he did essay,
Devised the journey and showed him the way.
Atar. And this uncouthness is clapped unto me?
Chr. Rumor is running that you wooed Sebastian
Into love's manners, warily to mend
The kingdom's tumult; and the credit is
'Twas more the tumult of your heart was quelled
Than government's defection.
Atar. Thou shalt be judged.

(*Enter* KING BOHANOC *and* QUEEN EDAMIA; GREGORIUS *and attendants.*)

Boh. A moment of reflection ere hot war
Hacks at our breasts to cut our loves away.
As an adventurous man, returned at home,
Grows mournful-captious o'er his idle strain,
So doth a kingdom, with reflexive health,
Cark o'er its peace and chide the careful hours.
Congested fury turns upon itself
And gluts in the havoc of incivilities.
There will be some blood-letting in this place.
Bedevilled sportsmen now hunt for our lives.
The crown sleeps with its jewels; helmet bronze
Gleams where the golden turret once pressed our brows.
Unto your temple for eventful prayers,
We come, my daughter. Christopher, my captain,
Tap at your sword and bid it ready be.

Atar. This visitor, who comes in jumbled hour,
I find obnoxious. Him I shall condemn
With his two comrades captive now within.
Boh. What has he done?
Atar. It will be told.
Boh. Much I discomfort at these novelties
Proceeding. When the very air is full
Of magic, juggling, black-art pantomime,
Surprise abounding, then my spirit falls,
And all the view seems to have the falling sickness.
Atar. Bring hither those within.

(*The two* COMRADES *are brought out, bound.*)

Remark them now,
These two are the difference when the sum of good
From good and evil is subtracted: creatures
Left over and malign. Gaping with grudge,
Forewarned yet heedless of, with swords exprest,
The whilst I kept at door, they sought Sebastian
To kill;
As this outswaggering cousin stood me here,
Thrust at my soul with man's most mockery,
To that—no more. Come forth, ye heinous two.
You have engaged in sinister exploit.
The remedy is death.
Boh. Let us be economical with life,
And mellow in decree, ere yet the mood
Forsakes all gentle opportunity;
As being kind to the ill-wandering foe
May give the vulgar sort some wise resolve,
Knowing we are not always cruel.
Edam. Yes, Ataragon.
Although I am your mother in love only,
Unwarranted in flesh and blood, unsealed
With native wax, see, your parental king
Shares all his greatness with me. Give thou me,
As to him, fond respect for this entreaty.
Let me be orator for these intruders.
Give them the franchise of their beating hearts

To tell their brethren. In these burning days,
A finer temper may come to the minds
That now are testy.
Atar. Be there a drop of pity
Or affectation of it in my blood,
I'll use it for your sakes, and, using,
Do use it up. Go tell your fellows now,
Ataragon did have such pitiful drop,
And that you've had it. Now I am sheer of it.
Depart.
(*They are unbound; exeunt.*)
So then, thou scandalous Christopher,
I shall not take a kinsman's noble life.
All else I take from thee.
Edam. What is his crime?
He ever looked sincere.
Atar. That was his crime.
Chr. These men assailed thy promised punishment.
I brooked thy vanity, thy less than little.
Forgive me for this little erringness,
That has a huge repentance.
Atar. Thou dost not plead as shrewdly as thou railest;
And for the falsehood thou hast sounded here,
So shalt thy life resound with answers false
To thy requirements. Gone be all thy titles;
Thy name be stricken from rewards and honors.
Dark be thy days on earth, and cold thy fireside.
Dead be the heavenly tree that flourishes
With thy hereafter. Let its fruits drop tasteless.
Black writ on black thy total history.
John. O my poor boy, now poor art thou indeed.
Chr. If I be made a slave, I'll be a good one.
John. Fool, remember thy glory.
Boh. What you have done I have no certainty,
Yet certain am her judgment is of justice.
Chr. My king, I quaffed from thy hospitable cup
And bit as soon the souring stone in vain.
Not all in disappointment, I do not
Reject the deeds whose honors are not mine.
Hope's fruits, that rotted ere the ripening time,

I cast away, and, with some patience yet,
Against the truculence of this day, hurl
The melancholy challenge of my love.
Edam. What hero could say more, after his nibbling
Of roses sugared for a farewell feast?
(*to Ataragon*) How dost thou, daughter? May there come a time
To ponder up less penalty?
Atar. I swear by the imperishable good
That never will I measure this again.
If him I e'er should meet with tenderness
Or like of slipping welcome, may Hell's mouth
Open and suck me smoking in.
Edam. Shame standing naked without shame
Were not as reckless.
Atar. Now let us in to prayers, and work the sky
That this distressful country never part
Its emblematic powers. Our Sebastian is
Henceforth our pledge, ourself, and will with us
Dart at the copious rebels, to make blood
Drip in the damned outside of monarchy.
Edam. (*to Chr.*) Bold man, that under bolder penalty
Bows now his head, let not thy grief go forth
Without the tear of one grief-sharing eye.
Within thy misery, hold one good wish,
Thy queen's.
Chr. With daily recollection, that good wish
Will be lifelong abundance.
Edam. Dear Bohanoc, I cannot go to prayer
So soon after the hearing of a curse.
Boh. A king can pray alone.

(BOHANOC, ATARAGON *and attendants enter temple.* EDAMIA, *with attendants, remains on steps of temple.*)

Edam. (*looking toward Christopher*). So fair a forehead for so foul a curse!
How gallant in humility he stands,
Like the war-horse decked for patriarchal fray,
Like the entrancing stallion, mystic-eyed,

Breathing of Heaven, fronting revelation.
Edamia, the whom, no whit the less,
Honor still boasts as child, has yet such hand
As fain would on his patient shoulder lie.
What more than sympathy begins in me
That him would take aside as fellow fellow?
This exquisite nuisance in my breast! O breast,
Thou hast no eyes! Within the darksome cloak,
Why dost thou tremble as to see his plight?
My own eyes, turn away. You must not see,
Nor hold the head agrieving more than he. (*exit*)

ACT II. Court yard of Palace.

GREGORIUS *and* ABYMELIG.

Greg. Never was blindness deeper gloom, Abymelig,
Than yesterday, the climax of all eyesight.
And yet each glimpse was almost losing sight,
So hot was the beholding of the battle.
Abym. I thought I almost saw, so loud it was.
My ears did laugh back in excess of hearing.
Tell me, Gregorius.
Greg. The deathly fever never pulsed as high,
And white lips never were as many. God!
The ardent, scarlet perfume of men's lives
Did gurge throughout the battle's front and rear
In the huge celebration of their hate.
Rebels and king never in as short a time
Emptied as many astonished hearts, making
The day at noon with blood dawn red again.
Abym. These rebels peopled up their Kingdom Come
To make a kingdom go. Give more, Gregorius.
Greg. The king and Christopher—
Abym. Still is it Christopher?
Greg. Aye, for his battle-axe beside the king's
Did excellent parallel. The king,
Though pulled and parleyed by his ministers,
Had cursed them to the plagues, and sought the density
Of war, and fought as 'twere the rousing heart
Of war, more than a paltry human thing,
He would rip open—Christopher at his side;
And seemed the two trained from rejoicing youth
To do the work together. Then all changed,
And Christopher pushed further in the fray,
Amid the weapons lost as in a forest;
There did his axe construct a field of ruin.
Axe? No; a dragon; to and fro its head,
Whose convulsed angers, with continuous lappings,
Took breasts and throats. Once he was backward pressed,

But with each added backward step subtracted
One from his pressers, till he gained his ground;
And all that followed then were in the stains
Upon his blade. The like carnivorous battling
I have not seen since blood became high-prized
With liberty. There was too much for good;
And it is feared that this luxurious corpse-making
Makes other trades unpopular.
Abym. Blood's Monkey!
You talk as if this age invented killing.
Tut! Men will die, and some will bleed before.
There's naught so worthless that it can't be sold
At the price of life. Devil come up! Name's legion!
Cry hallelujah and fly at the fact.
The day was hot, Gregorius.
Greg. Yea, hot.
Abym. And if brave men flare not of their own heat,
Nature will lend humanity a hand.
Greg. Yes; I have seen. I've seen.
Abym. And were so saying.
Greg. Too much for memory,
That like a bucket in a torrent held,
Through over-filling force, never fills up.
So wild was yesterday, my memory's lost
Most of its wildness.
Abym. You had a friend killed in the day.
Greg. He fought near Christopher, and, groping further,
Sickened in overwhelming fury—fell.
'Twas in the most expiring place of all.
Around his jumping battle-form, it went
As if to rally Hell, tomorrow Doomsday,
And life inconsequent. God knows, no man,
Though 'twere the king, topping his fellow-kind,
Could have stood on that crowded spot and lived.
Unnatural was it. Lives threw their men away.
So swiftly stroke with stroke revolved, it seemed
The slain still slew the living.
Abym. Well worth the telling, and told as 'twas worth.
And yet today is like to yesterday;
More men lost on it might have won the ground.

And Christopher still takes the common air.
Heard you him speak?
Greg. After such probing with their steel,
Hardly so cooled with mortal exercise,
He and the king in silence walked away.
And all the while, beside my idle spear,
Posted in sight of war, I watched its wounds.
Here comes the Christopher who toiled within it.
Abym. I'll walk with you.
Greg. Nay; I'll remain. (*Exit Abymelig*)

(*Enter* CHRISTOPHER *and* WINIFRED*; she carrying flowers*).

Win. These come from the other side of the hill, and these—
Chr. Wild roses, plucked, I guess, afar from here.
Win. Yes, yes; in the glen. A fawn was biting them.
At once I had no mind to shout him off;
And then I thought, as if he had enough,
Half for the fawn and half for Christopher.
Them I'll arrange with crocuses and hazels
Upon your table; yet they're dull enough.
Chr. Dull? No. They're gay surpassing all my gaiety.
Win. You will not care: I had a sweetheart once,
And every while stuck hazels in his hair.
You will not scorn to see about your house
The very token that I gave to him?
Chr. A blessing on your sweetheart and the hazels.
(*Exit Winifred*)
Greg. Keep him in eye that has no eyes.
Chr. The eyes of my curiosity keep toward him.
Greg. He was born on the dark side of the moon,
And howling-blind fell to our earth.
Chr. You mean that now his worst
Is not his howling back at the moon.
Greg. Fanatic, flatterer, contriver, madman,
His useless head is packed with apparitions
That make him feared by those who have no fear.
Believest thou in magic? Then take him
For all that's wonderful.
Chr. Too much magical

Passing as flesh and blood perplexes me
With the turns of its adventurous images.
Greg. There was a noble image in this kingdom,
Whose feet in battle raised the dust of Hell,
Whilst Heaven set a wreath upon his brow.
Still can he smoulder; but the heavenly bays
Are gone.
Chr. Thought I of magic, then I had believed
Him spellbound, utterly unutterable
Of his own championship and speaking self,
While the princess gave to her own whim full speed.
Greg. A time there was, when fouled with contradiction,
He would have rumbled like a stationed army,
To note that fouled he was; and note was taken,
Be it by army or Ataragon,
On bended knee.
Chr. Of all these interests and royal topics,
I am the vagabond.
Greg. I saw you
As one whose once proud words and high command
Had come to sudden wretchedness; as one
Who, in his dubious, down-hearted plea,
Babbled of his tormentor's faith and virtue;
Then silent stood for lack of faith in hearing.
Chr. Can there be love or justice leaking here?
Find God who can, I cannot even find man.
Some deep stagnation on his lip keeps him
Incredible. Behold the imperial statue.
Is it mud or a monument? With such things visible,
Who'd even curse them or half turn to see
The Devil himself say "damn it" in despair.
Greg. A humble soldier I, yet not so humble
That I must add my frowns to any frown
Howe'er majestic, if the time and frown
Be not to my liking. Tie me with the dogs
If I can understand the many tricks
That some triumphant minds call honorable.
Chr. Who fights for Bohanoc bleeds for Sebastian:
That is a trick of destiny.
Greg. Touching the friendship of the king,

You have the fame but not the favor of it;
And for my commendation of your case,
You have the favor, but it bears no fame.
Perhaps, though loosened from the royal blessing,
You will, like the great exile, fond of manner,
Hold gorgeous pride within thy hollow state,
Scorning the lowly station that is mine
And the gossip of a military bystander.
Chr. Gregorius,
If my friends are not my friends, then my friends are my friends.
The poor idolator before his idol
That stares at him brazenly or blinks by candle
And never mutters with a miracle,
Kneels not unceasingly.
In faith we're faithful, but in doubt, reluctant.
Who gives me doubt gives me not faith. Once I
Rapt in the brilliance of this haughty world,
Reflected some of its own excellence,
That lured me to surmise another light.
I managed well, yet bungled thinking of it;
As casting in the drama of my dreams,
Loved, living characters, reared in vain realism;
And should have dreamt with dreams, that I might know
There's nothing, and our all-beseeching hands
Clutch at the throat of the impossible.
Greg. I take you as a dreamer over-dreamt
And mad with the impossible. Yet such visions
As come of woman, woman can protect.
Chr. Such dreams protect?
Greg. The queen could help you.
Chr. Could?
Greg. Receive it as a proverb of the queen:
She has more heaven in her little finger
Than lies in all Ataragon's imagination.
In the subtleties of woman, she construes
What precedes alpha and what follows omega.
Chr. That wrecks the simple alphabet of love,
Benumbs the functions and annuls the words.
Greg. In such an ecstacy you loved Ataragon.

Chr. All other lights were shadows.
Greg. Idols of pure gold heed not
Thy golden flattery; and those of clay,
Are deaf to many arguments. Each is
As made; and all thy prayers change not her substance.
This ever have I proven good in love:
Lay siege unto the weak; take strength by storm.
The weak will temporize; the strong embrace
The tempest.

(*Enter* BOHANOC, EDAMIA, ATARAGON.)

Boh. Well met, my captain, and how cracked the day
Upon your bones?
Chr. These uncracked bones persist,
My lord. How fares your battered thumb?
Boh. I've fought with staring ribs, nor slacked the pace;
By this thumb, slight its injury, offends me.
I hope we shall not wave the axe today.
Edam. I fear you both today. Though soft ye speak,
The fresh complexion and the rash of battle
Around your eyes do linger. Christopher,
You startled us with your impulsive arm.
Chr. Less than you startle me with comment on it.
Edam. Thou art too wilful-modest. Even as Bohanoc
Arises from his bed on battle-day
Too early, so dost thou, great prince, arise
Too quick and early in thy modesty.
Chr. It is a mood that's better early than late.
Boh. There's, in creation, one that's modest always:
The moon. Last night the moon in modest beauty,
Rolled from her couch. Oft in my solitude,
I think upon the moon.
Edam. The moon, my lord?
Boh. I do not understand the moon. I like it
Therefore.
Atar. The sun is hard upon us.
Boh. Let me think
Then of tonight's moon, last night's or tomorrow's,
When the ghosts of my betters, whom I've slain,

Tread the transparent way.
Edam. Thy betters?
Never a better soldier or a king
Went forth to clear the field of undeservers.
Boh. They're dead, and so my betters. Christopher,
You labored like a king; which is to say
You have made your own sovereign half-ashamed
He went no further and outkinged himself.
Chr. Thou shamest me with more royal praise;
And I must hide my head in more performance.
Boh. My ministers advise to make you champion,
With full command and splendor of the title.
Chr. Titles and splendors wear I none.
Boh. Ataragon,
Has not this man's o'erladen gallantry
Given thee cause to offer him your mercy?
Atar. There's naught can do it.
His penalty was dated for all time;
And all is done except continuance.
Boh. Is the spiritual so unyielding to true spirits?
Is there not some way that the trenchant law
May yet undo itself and still be law?
Atar. The law and not the trespasser is holy.
Boh. And some there are that smack the meaning of it.
The imperial eye lifts to the empyreal blue,
And stops for lack of welcome. In the skies
I look as any humble wayfarer.
Thus do I fare. Be with me, wife of war.
(*Exeunt Bohanoc and Edamia*)
Atar. A little thing, a little thing, a teardrop;
And many have a many; I, not one
To loose this vast inflexibility.
Ataragon, Ataragon. A voice,
A whisper fine as from a rose's mouth,
Calls me from strict establishment and grace,
To airs of unaccountable frailty,
More like a worshipper than fatalist.
Chr. What was it in thee that must wound this bosom
Before abandoning it?
Atar. I'll hear that sob within my happiest hour.

Chr. Of what material is thy happiness?
Atar. 'Tis woven of the winds, and so be thine.
Chr. For she with whom I wandered was a phantom,
Compounded how, I know not, with the woman
Fleshed now before me.
Atar. We are all ghosts.
Chr. This ghost hath blood in him.
Atar. And so have many women. There's the queen.
What message was it went between your eyes
And hers?
Chr. No message.
Atar. Then a thought.
Chr. If thought or glance or anything of eyes,
'Twas empty as a moonbeam of intent.
It shot no light nor word of anything
That was in me.
Atar. Then something that's to come.
I saw it. Bohanoc to Christopher!
From lord and master unto lord and lover.
The mischievous negotiations went
Like mumbling doves betwixt your fluttering eyes.
Chr. Before the enormity of such ambition,
I must forget thee, and forget much else.
Atar. Thou wilt forget.
Chr. Toss up a stone until it learn to fly;
So will I heave thy memory till it leaves me.
Atar. Thou wast a fond and fiery lover always,
With many powers of the impossible.
Chr. Eternal was my love, and yet it ended,
For with the doomsday of my soul in thee,
Cessation came to my eternity.
No more I love; which said, I love thee more.
And the more I love the less of me remains
To wonder that my lovelorn self, thus lessened
And hurt my love, can love more than before.
Each day I scanned the heavens, while the sun,
Like angel with a flaming sword, drove me
To night's despair. At night I watched
The sumptuous convent of the stars, and asked
If one of their good omens might be mine.

Hope saw and then saw not, and hoped again
To see. O wicked witch that, at our birth,
Bestows the gift of hope. Thrice-wicked hag
That stands beside the sufferer and soothes
His hope with momentary sweets; for still,
Within the framework and the agony,
Hope is the wild and supernatural part
That dies to feed upon its own dead heart.
Atar. A bit of passion, and we made all that poetry
Float like a summer on the useful earth.
Chr. Here comes a man that's on his way to Hell
For the lewd larceny of an angel's blessing;
And yet no token on him that he knows
Whether a blessing or a curse is in him.
Thief, knowest thou what thou hast stolen?
Atar. Farewell, dear Christopher; and, with the perfume
Of one unhappy woman on thine arm,
Seek thou another. (*kisses him*) (*exit Christopher*)

(*Enter* SEBASTIAN *and* ABYMELIG)

Seb. This Christopher is your indubitable foe.
Meek he is now; yet now is not enough.
We have no surety that, in gathering victories,
He will not dare confront your sacred name
With his grown military.
Atar. Abymelig, hast thou talked with Christopher?
Abym. No, Lily of the Sky; yet I have heard
Deeds of him I would not take eyes to have seen.
Seb. War is a monstrous god that oft breeds beautiful,
Or is a beautiful, that may breed monsters.
Atar. Belike his victories may be personal;
Yet most I mourn his words. Thou knowest, Sebastian,
I was not first to lay love's hand on hand,
As he did say.
Seb. No, sweet; I swear you did not.
Atar. Though having right, being of that degree
That, in propriety and maiden case,
Might have the loving imputation put.
But you were bold, and boldly drew me toward,

Shaking the holy edifice with wooing.
Seb. Let him be gone; and if he will not go,
Then woebegone be they that love him still.
Atar. Though we have the right, let's not push it extremely.
He's loved now by the people.
Abym. Going may mean returning; dying ends the story.
Seb. I'm for it that an exile be writ for him,
Giving authority to execute
Him if he stay; and stay he will, no doubt.
Then if, on such instruction, he not go,
There is a hand that can strike death—a hand
Not further from my left than left from right.
Atar. If death be done him, there'd be question on it.
The crowds would murmur "why?" And even gods
Die, being questioned. Christopher will go. (*exit*)
Abym. If the world be an egg—
Seb. An egg?
Abym. Verily, an egg. If the world be an egg,
Then by the gods and by grace of the goddesses,
There is a chick to come.
Seb. But if, in pleasure of some other fancy,
The world be something else—
Abym. There is nothing that is not an egg.
I speak from the hatching point. Something comes of it.
The obvious earth, the impossible sky, proud woman,
Mysterious kingdom; something may peep out.
Seb. So be the wisdom of it.
Abym. And whosoever, cogitating freely
Upon an egg, and knowing not its constitution,
Would have a thought that this ungainly shell
And sloppy contents, in the course of days,
Would open and let fly a winged creature?
Couldst thou, from scrutiny and pondering on it?
Seb. Nay, nay; not I.
Abym. 'Tis matter then to be foreseen
What birds may peep from facts now in the nest.
Seb. I warrant that you've seen the pregnant branch
Where this nest has its bower.
Abym. Some do say that I
Am wonder-stricken with the poisonous light

Spilled of the moon; by which I am a dreamer.
'Tis merely for predicting that tomorrow
Follows today. Some facts are feasible.
Seb. 'Twere useless to deny today as egg
Whence hops tomorrow.
Abym. Why, sir, 'twere folly to a fool. Each man
Upon the slopes of wisdom feigns himself
At the mountain top; and all above him, when upward
His eyes do visit, he surveys as clouds.
Now, who's the dreamer: he who from the peak
Dreams higher than his feet will carry him
Or he who dreams the higher peaks are mist?
Seb. Abymelig, to thee I do gaze up,
And laud thee from the top of admiration.
Abym. I grant you. Ha! Let's talk of things in the air.
Seb. The earth's our subject matter nevertheless.
Abym. The common view, but not our privileged viewpoint.
Where find you honor: on the earth or sky-bound?
Seb. I hold my honor not so high that it's out
Of reach for worldly good, nor yet so low
That I may not condemn the baser sort.
Mine honor should not posture in the clouds,
Where men may mock it; nor hang on my shoulder,
Where I may drag it. More precise to be:
It dwells not in my heart, where men will bruise it,
But in my head, where I with prudence use it.
Abym. 'Tis just; yet honor is a bond.
Seb. We live in a certain bondage.
Abym. Much to the entertainment of those culprits
Not so convicted. We must measure this,
And find the length to which our fibers go.
Seb. So I have seen atimes that honor makes
Good rope for a cow but will not fly a kite.
Abym. Does not the string, my lord, nag at the kite,
That else could not maintain its windy summit?
Seb. The string of honor could not hoist alone.
A spurious bird upholds it in the winds.
Abym. All operated by a staring boy,
Whose poor head knows not what conflicting causes
His rich hand holds.

Seb. Can there be men so handling opulence?
Abym. I speak not of the pusillanimous;
I say thou art not such. In these ideas
Of men, are overegg and underegg.
You let no man o'eregg you, though he own
That ornament which makes the brow majestic,
And the seat whose occupant is at a level
Whither men bow their shy, unroyal heads.
Seb. Thou tell'st the truth of me, Abymelig.
Abym. Days are to come when unfamiliar sights
Will, in this air, flourish their marvelous wings,
Rove through the clouds and prey on wonderment.
Mine eyes cannot behold; joy see for me.
Seb. Glows like a phoenix in flamboyant ashes,
My everlasting faith, again, again,
In mine own destiny. What king is there
But Bohanoc that keeps me not a king?
More king than he am I, for that more kings
I have in my undoubted ancestry.
More times a king than he in blood and right,
I have been more, within that right of blood,
Impetuous by blood to prove the right.
Abym. What is a king in history? Were he
Prince of the orotund earth, he meets a day
Too royal and too terrible for human eyes.
Seb. Discoursing of a prince not in his praises
Is mouthing rebellion; yea, it is treason
To say that monarchs die.
Abym. Nature herself rebels at Nature. Treason
Is honesty audacious.
Seb. We are honest,
Being natural; so too the rebel chiefs.
Abym. War, the world's timely issue of blood, a season
Of sultriness and bloody escapades—
Take it for what thou wilt—a hot condition,
Rebellious or romantic. War is warmth,
To hatch an opportunity. There's love;
That's warmth. Where love is, chance is—change of heart;
And such a change as may promote new throbs

Within a whole environment of hearts that dream
Not of it.
Seb. Bohanoc may think
I love his daughter better than his kingdom,
My heart in which I never can forget.
Now is mine honor bound to fight for him
In this rebellion.
Ha! I do let mine honor go to war;
But shall not risk my hand at it. If he
Be slain, I should not say: "I weep for thee
That canst no longer make me weep. The tears
I shed for mine own tragedy I turn
To thine," I shall not say.
Abym. What harpies, vultures and Stymphalian birds,
Fates, Graces, Gorgons, all mythology
And pandemonium convulsed with Nature
In one great orgy of destruction—Bah!
What's that unto a king, if king he be?
He'll glance at ruination and receive it
With courtly grace.
Seb. There's one I fear more than the king.
Abym. Coiled in this chaos is the furtive queen.
Must look to her, for she is quick at looking.
With Bohanoc a moment gone, she would,
By her own beauty, keep herself aloft.
The queen hath an amorous leg, and sees the world
Supplied with princes for all purposes.
And she is of this kind; you know her better
When she's done worse than you could e'er have known.
Seb. Then may she know us better for the same.

ACT III. Garden near the palace.

CHRISTOPHER *and* JOHN.

John. When I dislike a thing, I like it less
As each sun rises on it. Night refreshes
And day refills my evident dislike.
Chr. How is it one as good can hate so well?
John. Some men hate viciously; some, with their virtues;
These plotting precincts can keep both employed.
Chr. Methinks it is poor place for pleasant fancies.
Ataragon, Sebastian and Abymelig.
John. A wondrous three, whom Bohanoc abhors
And is afraid of. I did see him scowl,
Frown like a godhead in terrestrial form,
Coming from camp, when her men in the wood
Made last night phosphorous with heathen fires.
Chr. If she were traitor to the king as well—
Oh, no. In her dominion spirit rules,
And rules o'er spirit, not the mantled creature.
John. Yet with Sebastian's mind, she may do anything.
She is abstruse, and mystery loves no one.
Love king, please people, pray God, woo Sebastian—
All will she. Takes much and gives little for it,
Glossing the world with lovely avarice,
Counting this man this much; another, that.
For women e'er were beggars all.
Chr. And beggar all our monarchy.
John. What is there here?
The princess, fair enough, if skin be fair,
Yet supple with that sorceries within,
We know not yet, as dedicating the heavens
To goblins and grotesques and sensual dance.
The king—carnage unleashed upon the field;
A brooding Satan in his home. A queen
That's too, too beautiful to brood on his brooding.
That is the publication of it.

(*Enter a messenger.*)

Messenger (*handing letter to Christopher*). For you, sir.
Chr. Who sends this?
Mess. It is from Fate.
Chr. Fate knows the answer then.
Mess. So I'll not wait. (*Exit.*)
Chr. (*reading*). In the name of the Invisible and of Ataragon: By virtue of the sacred law, you, hereby designated as Prince Christopher, are instructed that, within two days you depart from your present domicile and take no future residence within twenty miles of it. And you are further instructed not to engage again in battle or public parley. Failing this, you will be in sufferance of death. Witness the signet of the Mystic Tree and the hand of the Holy Temple.
John. Virtue for this?
Plant lilies in this excremental sod!
Now let us leave, glad to be spurned away.
This is a sea of pirates.
Chr. My ship sinks on the land. The solid earth
Has waves and perils for my voyaging.

(*Enter* EDAMIA.)

Chr. Peace be with us!
Edam. And art thou peace, Sir John?
John. Not I. Nor liberty save to withdraw. (*Exit.*)
Edam. Thou'rt calm.
Chr. I have been robbed, and only calm remains.
Edam. And I robbed of my calm; all else remains
To stir in confusion.
Chr. In ourselves
There's left a whole one, then.
Edam. Your calm and my confusion
Would not make one good soul; it would be traitorous,
And that's less than integrity.
Chr. All, all are traitors; none are true. The fool
That's true to others is false to himself;
And that's the worst of treasons.
Edam. It is thine.
Yes; worse than worst is to be self-accused—
Be criminal and victim and the judge;
Unloyal to thyself, betrayed by self

And by thyself judged guilty. Ataragon
Hath wronged thee much. Be careful lest thou wrong
Thyself with too much judging. Wisdom is a cat;
Sees well in fortune's night—prithee for what?
To catch a mouse of logic.
Chr. Yet thoughts do come, if not before the deed,
Then afterward. To live: to sing and jump
In this antique, extemporaneous world;
To love: love is a little while. And what
If these infinitives should be no more?
They are the grammar of a little nonsense.
Life is a looking here and there to the end.
To know, to know, I've walked all paths, to know,
Till knowledge paused incredulous, turned back;
While all of certainty brought no delight;
And all uncertain, pain. Survival finds
Its own endurance unendurable.
Love lingers where 'tis banished; thrives of venom.
What vitals hath our love that it survives
Unpoisoned with the coarse, nefarious food
That's found upon the tables of desire?
Yet cometh ever beauty to the scene.
A faint compassion, and the earthly heart
Outflies the supernatural.
Damned be the princess; blessed for me the queen. (*Kisses her*)
Edam. The king's queen!
Chr. I too am a king.
The queen's kiss has made me a king.
Edam. Her kiss has made thee outlaw.
Chr. Some are born
For their own law.
Edam. And some are born for torture.
Chr. The torture waiting for thy lips again
Must overcome all other agony.
Edam. The king shall know.
Chr. Go tell the simple king:
We choose our servants, not our vanquishers.
Edam. Christopher, that never fled from warrior,
Thou must from me be fugitive. Let mine
Be one of good predictions for your fate,

Yet far away.
Chr. "Go," say your lips; but "stay," your eyes implore.
I lipped those lips; they have good reason for bidding
Me hence. Your eyes have no such insult—eyes,
That, with their faraway considering, tell me,
"Be thou not far away."
Edam. Cursed art thou, Christopher, for gazing on me.
Chr. What wonders come of gazing! Eyes behold;
Mouth rants; arms wave; feet catch the stride. Whereat,
The hysterical tragedian stands aghast
In the illumination and the marvels
Of his own conjury, believing all
He bombasts, raging o'er his own behavior,
Infuriated by his own inventions.
Within the moment and the exigence,
The action blows too big for him: behold,
He bursts; still man in form but not in fact,
Because the dream is gone. And words did this.
Edam. Oh, burst, my manner of myself.
Chr. So then, is not an infant, born and twisting
Out of her body, offspring of the eyesight?
Shall I such tale of love now foist upon thee?
Kings, courtiers, courtesans, pretenders,
Bawds, mischief-makers, bandy-legged louts,
Caitiffs and concubines are apt in telling it.
Why, any woodman to his wench can say it.
Edam. Thou art, thou art, thou art—what art thou?
Chr. Who asks "what art thou?" Thee I do not know.
There's nothing to be known, for all is nothing.
Ah, most mysterious if we're more than nothing.
A dialogue between two mysteries—
We have it. Facing thus, what matters it
What notions pass between us? Stay! Whose thoughts
Are these? Not mine; and yet they're in my head.
Whose queen art thou? Not mine; and yet thou'rt here.
What are these jarrings on the door of life
That wakes the sleeper and he speaks to darkness?
The knock is heard; or at no mortal sound,
We ope the door and ruefully cry out,
Who's there? Comes no reply from beauty's lips

Red with love's perjury. O perjury!
The best that's told us is best perjury.
Edam. Oh, fearful!
With what commodities are you stored up
That I should yearn to buy with coins of pity
Warm from the holding of my timid hands?
And thou so young, with aged thoughts afflicted!
Chr. I am not young. So mingled are my years,
Lives juggled, terrors boded, in me is
Youth climbing to the shoulders of old age
To look for scenes that old age never saw.
Edam. And I.
I am not one come frightened here; nor cringe
Before the doors of middle age; nor hold
In mincing hand the blossoms plucked in girlhood.
The inquisitive sun may light my cheek at noon,
And find no ageing charactery there.
Still can I show, without affected usance,
The unrelinquished fancies of a maid.
My arms, with gifts of time though burdened, bear
No trace of troubling through those years: arms rich
With recollections of a king, yet poor
With some incomprehensible neglect,
Not yet of thee.
Chr. Those arms now beckon me.
Edam. But not thy conscience. That could never come
To rest here.
Chr. In his conscience now,
Sadly the captain of the king says "Never,"
He would not captain where the king reigns not,
Nor reign to make his king subordinate.
Yet in another conscience, he protests:
Ne never promised that he would not kiss you;
He never gave consent unto thy marriage.
No one consulted me, and I consult
Only thyself.
Edam. Still I consult thy conscience.
Chr. All's taken from me; and I'm given conscience,
So that I dare take nothing back.

Edam. There are
Pains of receiving pain, pains giving pain;
The last is truly worse; make it not mine,
But go before I ail with both mishaps.
The evidence is for destruction. Go!
Ah, I came here not to say "Go." Leave me,
Say I. Leave him, I said. There is no leave
Nor go. Weirdly I've listened to the discourse,
That, like two spectral voices in a ruin,
Made ruin of my competence. Come, come.
Go, go. This the continual debate
Within. While Fancy whispers, "Follow me,"
Oblivion wails, "Forget." Nay, is it nay;
And nay. What logic can make nay not nay?
Oh, is it less than those eternal nays
That sum up never?
Chr. Say that there's one less.
The signals! Hark!
Edam. Combat again!
Another, nearer shout. More lives are wanted
By the greedy difference of opinion. War,
That seemed once blasphemy and complete evil,
Is now a circumstance of agitation.

(*Enter* GREGORIUS.)

Greg. To arms! To arms! To arms!
Edam. To arms, all Hell, and fight my temper down.
Chr. Farewell, Edamia. (*Exit.*)
Greg. The king—is where?
Edam. The king? The king? 'Tis well.
Edamia, where's the king? He should be here.
Whisper thou "arms," and Bohanoc is near.
Even now I hear the footsteps of monarchy.
(*Exit Gregorius.*)
Insatiate madness! Still, these wars are drugs.
They're more than blood; and, with some feeding crime
Or sinful nutriment, o'erlavish the brain,
And make its thoughts divine absurdities.
Brawls are a man's place of divinity;
Excitement is a woman's drunkenness.

(*Enter* BOHANOC.)

How slow and thoughtful art thou, Bohanoc!
Boh. Today I have no whim for slaughter.
It is the birthday of my kingdom. Edamia,
How much in likelihood would be defeat
On the annual memory of that showy morn.
The worst guest comes upon the festive moment,
And celebration marks the day of doom.
Edam. Bethink thee! Life hath no such measurement.

(*Enter* SEBASTIAN *and* ATARAGON.)

Seb. Again the fats and greases of humanity
Are spluttering ire. This day we fight again.
To arms, my soul; and give me such contortion,
Such maxims of the sword and truthful stroke
That nevermore will treachery lift its head
To hiss its stench against our mighty lord.
Oh, were it given me to go afield,
And take them one by one, I'd do for all.
Boh. I'll go to camp direct. Sebastian, keep
Your forces to the left, and wait my charge.
My queen, your hair looks bonny in array,
As if some dreamy witch had copped it up
With negligence outdoing care. (*Exit.*)
Edam. Said "negligence."
Have care for negligence, for it brings care.
Why stays he here?
Brutish obscurity contracts his brows.
The inner effort rolls about his eyes.
What honor, brave Sebastian?
Seb. Ready, madam,
For the next furious moment. Have you seen Christopher?
Edam. Go that way, and not having found him there,
Return. He is expected here.
(*Exeunt Sebastian and Ataragon.*)
Edam. Gregorius!

(*Enter* GREGORIUS.)

Come hither, valiant man. Aye, more than that.

Come, Valor, and thy confidential ear.
That man—Sebastian; be near him today.
He is felonious, foul, engrossed in crime,
Rank, brined in guilt, means damage to Christopher.
If they two meet—Sebastian watch, who if,
By word, sign, manner, gesture or control,
Blush, motion, start or effort, seems to act
Murderously or else toward Christopher,
Kill off Sebastian and Sebastian's plots
Forever. Hast thou feeling for it? Say!
Gregorius!
Greg. From the bottom of your heart to the top of mine.
Edam. Then do it.
And at the time no hesitation strain.
But quick—quick as the Devil can wink an eye.

(*Re-enter* SEBASTIAN.)

Seb. I have not found him.

(*Enter* CHRISTOPHER.)

Seb. Are you for action?
Chr. Now, sir.
Seb. It is told
That you have orders taking you from battle.
Chr. Yes; it is told. All hark to what is told.
Why, that is the beginning, not the end
Of nursery tales; like "once upon a time."
There is more to it. Aye! Read on, Sebastian.
Now comes a dreadful scene.
Seb. Then let's to camp.
(*Exeunt Christopher and Sebastian.*)
Edam. O follow! (*Exit Gregorius*)
If he should die, indulgence would die with him.
If he should live, duty could not live near him.
Seb. (*without*). Help ho! Help me!

(*Re-enter* SEBASTIAN *running, with* GREGORIUS *close up*)

Help, friends. Friends, help!
(*Gregorius stabs him. Sebastian falls*)

(*Enter* CHRISTOPHER)

Chr. I'm cut in the back.
Greg. Lie here, my lord.
Edam. Oh, tarry; I will get physicians. (*Exit.*)
Chr. I'll die with soldiers, not physicians. (*Exit*)
Greg. I've killed a villain; goodly deed in times
When honest men kill honest.
Not dead, yet he will die. (*Exit*)

(*Enter* ATARAGON)

Atar. Oh, where is he? Blood speaks for him. Sebastian!
Seb. My death is for your sake.
Atar. Stay, stay, my life;
Lay thy head in my lap. I know thou'lt live.
Seb. In the lap of Nature I shall soon be lying.
I am falling. (*Dies*)
Atar. Alone!
Here is best effort sprawling on the ground.
Here's what I boasted. Nothing but a puzzle
Bleeding all out. O speak, ye gory serpents
Reeling around his body. Ye are from his heart.
Would that ye could rear up and bite at mine.

ACT IV. Room in Christopher's house.

CHRISTOPHER, JOHN *and* WINIFRED.

John. There never was like this a marriage.
Desire and expedition, from one cup
Together drank, and finished at a gulp.
Chr. I took her midst the trumpets and alarms
Of battle; sent her home quick-pledged, short-blessed,
A wee, bewildered wife.
Win. Think of this most injurious union.
You have in you something sometime addressed
"Your majesty." There is a golden tincture
Of scepters and of crowns runs in your blood.
Chr. God bless thee, little girl.
Win. Not girl in fact nor little in a fancy.
Chr. Yet we're all children much in need of blessing.
Win. Hush! "Blessing" is a fearful word.
Chr. When we deserve it,
And 'tis withheld.
Win. When we deserve it not,
And it is given.
Chr. What means my fanciful, my wife?
I'll call thee Fancy and not Winifred.
Why hangs thy pretty head?
Win. The ripe fruit hangs;
The green holds up.
Chr. What's ripened thee so soon,
Fond Winifred?
Win. Nay; call me Fancy, if you will.
How many things when Fancy called are fair,
That would be darker with another name?
Chr. Now you are questioning instead of telling.
John. So much uncertainty about me drifts,
I am uncertain where to move. However,
Move do I evermore. (*Exit*)
Win. I would speak of Abymelig. Well know'st thou him?
Chr. I know him well for all that is not well.

Win. Abymelig had a dream.
Chr. Do blind men dream, and in their eyeless mind
See that which is by day denied?
Win. It must be so.
Had he a dream of me, it was a bad one.
They who believe in signals of the night
Always dream evil. And he has announced
He will relate the hateful scene to you,
As'll make you angrily arise and kill me,
As you slay enemies. So I do fear.
Chr. The dream is naught to us. The damned bezonian
Frightens by bonny. He had better play
Blind man's buff with a bat than boo with us.
Win. O my lord! Christopher, dear Christopher!
Hold me, love, closer so. Abymelig
Dreamt that I was untrue to you, and swears
That he will tell you all he dreams.
Chr. He better not,
Or I'll make all of him, blind though he be.
'Twould be relief to many that have sight.
Fear not, my chuck, for that a wretch lies down
And behind his filthy eyeballs has a dream.
Win. Oh, no!
Chr. So there's the end of it.
Win. Ah, me!
Chr. Or is there any dangling end beyond it?
Win. What if it were no painting of the sleep
But indication of the light, as he,
Abymelig, in darkness sees it?
Chr. And at this time, a long tranquility
Descends upon him.
Win. What are you saying, meaning, whom speak of?
Chr. How soon! Ere confidence, having dived under,
Grapples the nether floods of destiny,
Has time to swim up for his breath, comes tempest,
With shock and raving wave, to lift the sea,
Enraged to find the victim still with courage.
Win. Forgive me, Christopher, for I am young;
And subterfuge is old as the tongue's history.
Abymelig, now scanning thy misfortunes,

O'er which the structure of thy calm was bright,
Desires to crash thy house with tale of me
In faulty action. But mine was not that.
Mine was the captured struggle of a dove
White 'neath a ruffian's hands.
Chr. Who is thy lover?
Win. I love him not; he is a vulgar one.
A soldier who deserted the king's arms and mine,
Abymelig doth know.
Chr. Held you him tenderly?
Win. Before I knew thee, Christopher—before.
Then he came back when I was part of thee.
Chr. Two days a wife, and —incorruptible Hell,
That think'st in curses, thinkest of me still?
O Bohanoc, insidiously avenged
For my unseen and incompleted sin!
Win. No, no!
Chr. Thus we have ended quickly.
Win. Is that all?
Is marriage a pressure, kiss and then farewell?
Is there no kindness yet?
Chr. What kindness would you have? What have you?
Win. You could not find a woman fond as I,
Or, now that I have yielded up my fault,
More truthful-humble, begging what thou givest,
Attentive to thy nimble wishes always.
Thou'lt not find such as I. Knowest thou not?
Thou dost not know. In thy comparisons
Of women, thou art poor.
Chr. And they are guileful?
Win. Oh, yes!
The most unruly would in marriage rule;
The worst are loudest; falsest, most arrogant;
The lowest in sinning are least penitential.
Look at the loveliest that e'er was loved;
The cream is skimmed and then the milk is curdled.
Chr. These as they are, are there not some yet faithful?
Win. Believe it, Christopher, faith and sworn matters
Are changing moods with women. Faith forever?
Summers and winters go within forever,

With days and nights that slowly fill the time.
Happy she that weaves pleasure's golden fleece,
From day to day and edge to honorable edge,
Without the telltale tarnish of guilt's thread
Entangled from an intervening hour.
The tapestry's not pure, my lord, with any.
Chr. We are born hungry, and the nourished brain
Acquires the habit of pursuit unending.
The indistinguishable soul, unsated
With the most satisfying flesh, goes on,
Seeking the nipples of some new desire;
Forever feasts, forever famishes.
Food for all hungers there is not.
There is a vision in us,
Or aspiration for a tempting thing
Curved like a bosom from a mocking sky,
Lures us to woman and to songs of her;
Then melts into despair.
Win. Let me sing thee a song.
Chr. Sing, thou, since thou hast quelled my only music.
Win. I'll get my harp, and chant beside its wires.
Chr. Play some dark tragedy on a tambourine,
Skippingly to and fro with thy feet.
Be noisy as thou wilt.
Win. Be not unkind. (*Exit*)
Chr. Alike though be their lessons, would that this
Were learned from whiter arms and sweeter lips.
God knoweth where we place our kisses.

(*Re-enter* WINIFRED)

Win. What shall I sing?
Chr. Sing "Paradise."
Win. (*singing*).

In Paradise there was a tree
Angel, sing merrily.
God wot, and there were he and she.
Demon, sing merrily.
To do this much and not that more,
Without that more they wandered free;
So runs the burden of this lore.
In Paradise there was a tree.

In Paradise there was a tree.
  Adam, sing merrily.
He did not know nor wist yet she.
  Eva, sing merrily.
Within the world of evermore,
The timid two thought not of three,
Nor wisdom had of men before.
  In Paradise there was a tree.

In Paradise there was a tree.
  Infant, sing merrily.
Heigh-ho for us and all to be.
  Old man, sing merrily.
While sinning least or sinning more,
It is enough for thee and me
To sing as all have sung before.
  In Paradise there was a tree.

Chr. 'Tis beautiful as ever, Fancy.
Thus fall the generations o'er and o'er.
Reading the terrible tale of an apple core.
Poor, frightened, pale, connubial waif—not sinful,
Though shaped with matter of provincial sin.
(*Trumpet heard*)
Hark! hither comes the king; so says the trumpeter
With hard-blown exclamations of his horn.
Win. I'll to my room.
Chr. Remain with me;
Not in a torment, but in smiling o'er it.

(*Enter* BOHANOC, EDAMIA, ATARAGON)

Boh. Is this a place where the creature's corporal iron
Can find a forge, and hammered be anew?
Chr. This hut hath for the body provender;
For majesty it is unqualified.
Boh. My body is it, and the spirit too,
That groans for indolence. There is a hand
Steals the indignant savage from my breast,
And with its shrinking captive awes the owner.
Couch me where angels comfort. The old ghost

Is rampant now, and shrieks alive, let go
Before the view that should come after death—
Processionals of souls and heavenly wings,
Or drooping deep into the shades of Hell
In caravans packed with perpetual horrors.
Edam. Station thyself, huge monarch; stare not so.
Inquire within thyself what ails thee.
Boh. I am compact of all that ails the earth:
Earth dead in earth, and earth more than alive.
Edam. Let earth rejoice within its short occasion,
And the eternal soul not mourn how short.
Boh. Earth hath a soul, and I have mine. It suffers.
I know it when it suffers. It must be.
Some cloud has borne upon me where is marked
The coming wound of destiny. There was
A time, and negligently then, and oft,
I'd have thrown to her haunches all-hazarding Fate.
Something akin to fear, a smitten sense,
Moves in me now, and casualizes that
It once o'ercame.
Edam. A little sleep, my lord,
Would be more virtuous in effect than these,
The tempers of a sleepless night.
Boh. In sleep
Is matter natural; waking is abnormal.
Aye! Life is good, but not to look upon.
And after pride's horrisonous bugle, telling
The triumph of our daylight ownership,
Humility bends o'er the heap at night,
Hotchpot of antique jewels, broken glories,
Pomps, purchases and gawds of majesty.
From these to sleep, kissed by forgetfulness,
Who would not bed himself? Away! With war
I shall not play today. Death's willing angel
Seducing to endearments mortuary.
Atar. Today,
If, in well-spent contention passed, will be
That one more victory that pledges peace.
See, I have come to welcome Christopher
To battle once again, favoring thee

That much.
Boh. There will be time.
I shall not walk the path of wounds today.
Atar. What is it? Thou wast never idle thus.
Boh. There is a reason past all reason; we are now
In it. Some deep subsultus in my heart
Pleads me to stay. Habitude falters, and, perplexed,
Gazes about for warranty of motion.
Atar. This is the very bottom, opposition
And other end of opportunity.
Edam. Persuade with him no more. He is not well.
All the congested moods, humidities
And previous efforts in him fight for air.
He is fought low; and writhing in his sleep,
Last night, cried out, "Unlucky day for kings."
His hands were hot as Fever Jack's, and wrestled
In cautious hold of the impalpable.
Boh. After such night, I should not tempt the day.
Atar. This day the temple stands equivocal
In songs of life or death. And while I supplicate
The skies, besiegers beckon me to fall.
Boh. Christopher is my goodly equal for you;
For he and I as column to column are,
Supporting the frieze and sculptury of duty.
Atar. Where is your duty in support today?
Edam. Speak'st thus unto the king!
Atar. I speak with reason. Reason hath no king.
Edam. Thou hast a father and a king. Forget
Not first the duties of thine own employment.
Atar. If I forget, my memory's underground.
Edam. With epitaph that does not say he prodded
A man in the back.
Atar. O vain step-mother,
Thou hast another careful step to take
Before thou couldst side with a daughter's grief.
Boh. Peace, all!
What else is or is not, this moment is
No time for telling. Bless me! Women's words
Are the alarms and piping tunes of war.
I did not ask for music.

Atar. Tell me of music, when my hearing is
A chain of noises winding to a grave,
With funeral thump. O that inclusive sorrow
Once called Sebastian! Hence like a swan away;
Was beautiful agoing, yet was ugly
For going away. So went the beloved bird,
His white wings wounded, distance-dimmed, untimely
Through the horizon. What doth purity
Endure for not enduring things impure!
Boh. Come, over-mournful daughter, to the air,
Where Nature's colors may heal up thine eyes,
Now vexed with fluent sorrow. How it is
That sights and sadnesses, from the same socket
Beneath the brow, are jointly functioned on.
As meaning then: to see's to weep. And yet,
To weep's to see, more clearly sometimes, that
Of which the unwashed eye is ignorant.
(*Exeunt Bohanoc and Ataragon*)
Edam. Ah, yes. Lash out, O hamstrung Pegasus,
When grief's the theme. If woman's tears—a thousand
For man's each separate sin—could wash
His murkiness to white, man glorified
Would be, twice o'er.
(*To Winifred*) Angel, attend the princess with some perfume
And handkerchief. And, be she interested
In beauty, tell her why the flowers have names,
How fine the squirrel's wit and jollity,
The beetle's wing, the robin's periwig.
Win. Most happily I go. I know those mysteries. (*Exit*)
Edam. So that's your gipsy, fingering a harp.
You spoke of her as housewife in the function
Of broom and broth and bowl of crocuses.
Chr. She's all around, half of the universe
Made female; yet what universal is
We cavil in selection.
Edam. High, too high,
Above the glory of transcendent woman,
Hangs thy great love. Such kindness is unkind
Unto the possibilities of all.
Chr. Now gleams the landscape of celestial height;

Now shudders the profound. Laugh with, weep with,
As to forbear and see this as this is,
Is not within our metal.
Edam. Not in thine,
That still demanding some pledge never given,
Holds you aloof, in spiritual disdain,
High, hovering, alone above the lust.
Lust is a beast that, having had his way,
Becomes a man, who then descries in scorn
The tawdry sheets where he bestowed his beasthood.
A man, he further thinks, becomes an angel
To view the woman lying there all human.
Chr. Human? Of that I long to learn. Is it
To say "kind sir" to every commoner?
What's this? A woman in my arms. She's mine.
Oh, no! Not mine. Out of the world she came,
And will return. It is a tempting heaven
To this proud angel that along her visits
Makes men her devils.
Edam. Thou, with thy raging fancies, devilest me.
Mayhap 'twill be thou'lt say I made thee devil.
If so, then say it. I behold thee good.
Chr. Your glance is like the augmented sun of summer,
Sending its golden sickness to men's brains.
Edam. Then comes the sickest summer of them all;
In the despondency of best intent.
How shall I now begin? Being here, have I
Come to the flashing climax of my life,
To hesitate, be meek and to return
At the whisper of a goblin in the gloaming,
By some called conscience? Who would be a queen,
If her queenliest wish of all must go with groundlings?
Chr. Heaven, which made beauty, made thee beautiful,
And knew the imperial path of thy adventure.
Edam. Thou hast a sin so sweet in its conceit
That even virtue could not sweeten it.
And yet there is a human interdict:
Thou may'st not look on all that Heaven made.
Chr. So say we in the forest of delight,
Pulling aside the branch, then letting go,

To shut the vision from our passionate eyes,
While near it, watchful and with gorgeous aim,
The soul still hankers.
Edam. For whose plunge to action,
Our life's a kingdom of excuses.
Chr. And some there are who speak with hand on breast,
Wreaking up nature to excite it more;
And some that put the finger to the brow,
Rubbing up reason to the council of war.
Edam. Verily, reason tells us what is fair;
The heart, what to be foully sorry for.
Chr. When reason rides the blood; aye; then it is
Pale rider on a crimson steed, as thus,
To try conclusions, round and round they go,
Proving which is greater, horse or horsemanship.
Yet reason's nothing more than so and so,
Controlling action that it does not know.
Can reason thirst? Can it kiss? Has it arms
Or episode or anything to do?
Or can it, in supreme emergency,
With wings in mystic flames, go to outblaze
Before and afterward?
Edam. There's modesty,
Landlubber left upon a sparkling coast,
Waiting for cargoes by bold others brought.
Say courage is not ludicrous. Praise virtue,
Extol the dawdling maid, endorse the sky,
And joggle summer clouds for fine comparisons—
Be she as pale as pearl, as faint as twilight,
So rare she makes a lover seem profane,
So chaste she lights Diana out o' the moon,
She will not equal my consideration.
Chr. Unseal the rose-jars of all memory;
Wander where censers reek with fragrant worship;
Seek where the urns of inspiration spill
Their most entrancing passion, thine is more
Than any.
Edam. Though praises move me not, they're worth a parley;
And even flattery deserves an answer.
What's this restraining thing that says we may not

Relate the tale that in the hopeful breast,
The depth and very shock-pit of the bosom,
Is in relation most elating? What is there
Estops me from within or authorizes
Injunction? We must find these paths ourselves,
(Lost in the storm of Do blowing on Do Not—
As wildered thus) flout the refulgent priest,
Heave out and cry through Heaven's corridors
On our own prestige, hooked responsibly
With wisdom, say I, for my lurking self.
But thou that thinkest of the sin—
Chr. Sin is a broken word; and love, a broken heart.
Edam. 'Tis better to sin with all the heart than suffer
With more than all. Woe for that hidden place
That gasps with something greater than itself
And sighs without response. For that, who loves
With all the heart loves with a broken heart.
It is too weak for its abundant wishing.
'Tis only half-heart love keeps the heart whole.
The other half is caution in control.
Whole-heart love is sick heart; half heartedness,
More wholesome.
Chr. Never in his pilgrimage
Has Time bent o'er two doting heads to kiss
Their kisses to a timelier evermore,
Nor flashed a brighter sun to solemnize
The first, incredible desire desired,
The words once heard and never heard again,
The kiss once felt, and after that unknown,
Save in their progeny of words and kisses.
Edam. There's only one first kiss; its lightning strikes
Ne'er in that place again. Not now again.
Withhold thyself. I have for thee some project
(As who would not, when thought doth follow thought
Upon the myriad footsteps and the meaning
That follows meaning out of sight) some purpose
To do with prudence, and that soon, if ever.
In truth, love uses a miraculous language;
Meanwhile its base, unmentioned miracles
Will have their way. What is this heavenly compact

When two inseparable voices meet
For comforting. 'Tis breath, 'tis words, 'tis kisses,
Making a ceremony of conditions
Unceremonial. Wring me not now,
Lest the expression of thy lower self
Misleap at life to die of odium.

(*Re-enter* BOHANOC, ATARAGON, WINIFRED)

Boh. (*to Christopher*). Heydey, thou consternation of the strong,
Be acting version of thy king today.
Discord, rise like a maniac o'er his banners;
Victory, go headlong over his pursuit;
Come, horrid gods of war; lend him your lightnings;
Make his glance fatal from his thunder-car.
Chr. Mingling of men and weapons. It is when
The merchandisers of ferocity
Bawl out their wares and curse the purchasers.
I'll incommode a few. And, oh, congenial
While this frame heaves in jarring rhapsody
The arms that sway in equilibrium.
Edam. Have care. Such courage may swing out too far
And meet the worst possessions of the war.
(*Exit Christopher*)
Boh. I deem it well to rest my sword awhile.
Life is a trap and all its flesh is bait.
Each flower has a demon at the roots;
Each root has track of something there before.
The ground has combinations, moving snares,
By Fate applied for man's uncautious treading.
And then to say, by doing such and such,
By pulling such a thread or following
The instinctive byways of the labyrinth,
He might bring demolition to his shoulders
Or narrowly evade calamity,
Make the charm work or take an angel's warning
And leave the trap unsprung. The mind's disaster
Anticipates the crime infernal; works
A thousand outcomes of no coming-out;
Weakens the girders of the neck; then hangs

The head unwatchful in the crisis. Faugh!
Thus I. Go, give today unto its lovers.
And hence! For I am weary; let me sleep.
Edam. Then fetch his body-guard and let him rest;
For he will rest as doth befit a king.

ACT V. Same room in Christopher's house.

KING BOHANOC *lying on couch.*

BEELZEBUB *and* GREGORIUS.

Beel. Salute you, Gregorius. Is my king asleep?
Greg. He has not waked since you left.
Beel. Has he moved?
Greg. No.
Beel. Have the flies teased him?
Greg. No.
Beel. Not one fly?
Greg. No. Silence. you swivel-eyed image of darkness. The king sleeps; has slept; and not anything has happened to make answer not No.
Beel. That's unfortunate, because when I was here, he shimble-shambled all over the covers. Twice he muddled himself in the bed-curtains; and I had to object. He was like a king with witches and wizards at him. Consequently I thought the room was full of little ghosts. I could almost hear them go chirp, chirp, chirp. I could hear the cat-woman and the snake-lover and the grandmother with the wolf-skin bag. Chirp, chirp, chirp. That's their persecution when they swear by the bat's wing and the black lamb's wool and the bleeding tooth and the burnt rag. Sometimes it's the howling dog and the cat with the skinned rump and the fire on the ground. The king heard it too, and he awoke; and he peered as if he thought I was working it for magic. But I was as much frightened as the king. Fortunately the physician left a large vial of sleeping potion for such opprobrium.
Greg. He has slept ever since.
Beel. Then I proudly say, Very good. My king is a great king, although a sleepy king.
Greg. How does the fighting go?
Beel. Very bad. If I am bold to say, very bad, indeed. Though I'm not a critic of tactics and body-cooling, yet when I see soldiers killed and wounded and escaping, I should pro-

nounce it very bad from my standpoint. But that may be, as some say, a matter of opinion, or, say others, a question of taste. From their own point, all may be well. To be killed, wounded and escape in the right proportion may be good battle. Time will tell, when we have found out for ourselves.

(*Enter* JOHN)

John. Good day, Gregorius. The animal
Still breathes in me; and that's all I may say
Of life and death, without recourse to theory.
How are you, gallant figure of monarchy?
Greg. Impatient, sir, at being thus remote
From those that struggle. Still, I've had my times
Of battle, and I like it not. By your leave,
I must refer you hence; the king sleeps here,
And privacy maintains. Leave, I adjure you.
Beel. Yes, we must conjure you up to leave.
John. I did not know. I have been privileged here
With Christopher, my almost son. God help!
I have been wretched. Yesterday at noon,
A boyhood friend that knew me in my prime,
Finding me here in dolorous retirement,
Observing the white crescent of my hair,
And Time's rendition on my forehead,
Quoth he, O young man, how old you have grown.
Pardon the violation of this room.
I did not know. I did not know. Adieu! (*Exit*)
Beel. That was a long introduction to Adieu.
Greg. I have been thinking that we should wake the king. Hark to that windiness of shouts, a sound that heaps up anguish as if a whole army were in pain.
Beel. It sounds like our men. It sounds like royal anguish. No scruffy rebels could make anguish like that.
Greg. I'll see what it is. (*Exit*)
Beel. This must be the time to give His Majesty the sleeping potion again. He might look to me to be asleep through and through, but not from a medical theory. A physician could feel by the pulse if the sleep is not satisfactory. Heydy, Your Majesty, wake up. Hey di do. Wake up, Majesty. Wake up and take your sleeping potion. Four times four—wake up. The

physician said to me, "Beelzebub, give this to the king." And I asked, "What is it?" "It is to make him sleep," said the physician. And I asked, "For how long?" "For an hour," said the physician. And I said, "It might do for an ordinary abdomen an hour, but it will not make a king sleep for an hour." And "we will take advice by that," said the physician. So he made it stronger. "I'd have done it," said I. "I'd have done it, because a king deserves more than a common show-man." I didn't think of it at first; and the best of it is I'm assistant at the snake festival. I've mixed the drugs for the witches and dancers, and I'd have done it. I'd better give that potion before Gregorius comes; because he's ignorant of those things. He's a whiffler. Hello, Your Majesty. Come, come! What's the matter? I don't know. Surely, wake up. I can't wake him up. Wake up. Shake up. What's the matter with him? He's colder than I thought he was. He doesn't breathe any that I can tell. I can't feel his heart beat. It's not beating. What! Gregorius! Gregorius! He's dead. Oh! He's dead! Oh! He's dead! Gregorius! He's dead! He's dead! He's dead! O, Gregorius, oh! (*Exit*)

(*Re-enter* GREGORIUS *and* JOHN)

Greg. The negro says he's dead. Come, look you, sir.
He's cold. For God's sake, find life, if you can.
John. This is a corpse, Gregorius. There's no king here.
There is no current blood nor interchange
Of living values. All is done.
The loving attitude and viewing eye
Will never from this rampart show again.
Go, Gregorius.
Summon the queen. This is her teardrops. We
May stand aghast; hers is the privilege
To mourn.
Greg. Stay you near this, Death's masterpiece. (*Exit*)

(*Enter* ABYMELIG)

Abym. What ho!
Are there no eyeballs reconnoitering here
To see for me? I've staggered near the battle,

Without consent, as retribution shouted
For more. I've grouped through murders, thunders, ghosts,
Jostling catastrophes; everything motive
Has passed by me and grazed my embraced cheeks.
Is this the house of Christopher? Speak, ho!
John. It is, good sir.
Abym. Where can I rest my head?
My gorge is swollen with a thousand risings.
Hark!
Death works this way. Broad-winged Astonishment
Doth hop from cloud to earth and earth to cloud.
Fortune of War is drunk and laughing full
From foe to foe, and shouts indifferently.
One time 'twas said the king was whelmed from the field.
John. Hush, man! The king is dead. In this room's air,
His once-proud lungs, not now participating
With us, took their last breathing. Here he lies.
Why are you careful, backward in your steps,
As one on slippery footing?
Abym. I go to find the princess. Fare thee well.
It was reported that the king was beaten.
That could not be, if no king were alive.
Died he of wounds?
John. The wound's invisible.
What do you think this means?
Abym. Only that the invisible
Is where the blind and seeing meet as equals.
Farewell. (*Exit Abymelig*)

(*Re-enter* GREGORIUS)

Greg. Make way! The queen!
Is it the king or kingdom that is dead?
Now, sir, all excellence is down. Look you.
Our haggled hordes go slowly round the hill.
This window frames a picture past endurance.
I saw the princess wavering for a moment
At her temple door. By rebels hedged one way,
She doffed serenity, and, plucking speed,
Ran like a hamadryad through the woods,
Thrilling the distance with her flight.

John. Saw you Abymelig insanely smiling?
Greg. The blind man looked unutterable things.
And blind were they who uttered no curse on him.
John. Hast heard of Christopher. my brave, brave boy?
Greg. Whose head is high or whose hand on the ground,
I have not heard. Order is out. All's moving.
Go, now. Here is the queen in sceptered sorrow.
(*Exit John*)

(*Enter* EDAMIA, *attended, and with two soldiers*)

Edam. Something was loose within the elements
When Bohanoc breathed out. O my dead mate!
Was thy appearance here a trick of Nature
Played upon fools to make their eyes boil over
With frightful waters?
Where is the king? This lump, this arrant body,
Has been a hot contrivance of the sun;
This audible and majestic circumstance
Merely a ringing in our ears, a fraud,
And here lies less than least it ever was
To say that once 'twas more than nothing.
(*Noise heard*)
Greg. While time allows, let us conduct you hence,
Pardoning interference with your grief.
Edam. Must we go vulgarly to save our lives?
Gregorius,
When time allows, find his physician.
There was some mischief in this liquid sleep.
(*Shouts and tumult heard*)
Greg. There will be time. 'Tis now to save the living.
These two and I will shield your thousands graces
Against a thousand swords. (*To soldiers*) D'ye hold?
Both soldiers. I hold.
Edam. One moment let me eye these frozen eyes.
Deterred by gestures of derisive Fate,
Thou liest grim. Go, lofty galleon,
Thy sails with empyrean tempests filled,
Angels around thee, like the white sea-birds
That bring the ship to harbor.

(*Enter* CHRISTOPHER)

Greg. Are you hurt?
Edam. Speak, speak! Cry out!
Chr. Cry out, despicable throat!
It came too soon, that which, with lowly hands,
Seizes the ankles of upflighted victory.
My best was useless. Gregorius, I am weak.
Ruin appals my head. Where is the king?
Edam. In sleep and fever, dreams and death, he passed;
And naught is left save this, his few days' clay.
Chr. We look, and that which must be here is not.
Why, fellow-sufferers, I believe we're made
To be what we abhor, or be hit on the brow
With those eternal stones we cast away
In childhood.
Edam. Should I be what I was and nothing more,
I should be less at this. Now I am queen and king.
When I put forth my dangerous hand, see ye
That messages like falcons fly from it.
I'll be the flatterer of your bravery;
Come, Christopher, thou art not lacking aim.
Chr. Wide open will I split the day again.
Edam. And what is won is thine.
Chr. Let me have bread and a little wine.
Edam. Edamia will bring thee wine. (*Exit*)
Chr. And Bohanoc, while thou art not thyself,
Without a word, deficient in all ways,
For thee and for thy queen, I'll gather up
The drifting losses, bear the prize to thee,
Thou heedless owner of all this sovereignty.

(*Re-enter* EDAMIA)

Edam. Here's crimson drinking. May your sword so drink.
Chr. Hail, crimson spirit of the wine.
I drink you, drink your body, wings and shaking hair.
Edam. Thy vision now is foremost.
(*Exit Christopher*)
(*At window*)
How this emblazoned soldier on black horse,

Whose fast, concurrent hoofs go in a cloud,
Resumes his wrath!
A woman comes this way, with twofold glances
At perils on both sides. Backward
Also she recks, and does more looking round
Than coming on. Gregorius, unhatch
The door. A mournful princess enters now.

(*Enter* ATARAGON)

Atar. Oh, I have stumbled full knee-deep in dangers.
Edam. Gregorius, there is a company of men
That graze that hazy hill. Direct them hither.
Greg. With speed. (*Exit*)
Edam. Come, now, obstreperous woman.
I, the astrologer of thy wicked stars,
Will mark the spell that overrules thy soul,
First giving thee time to weep. I've lost a king;
Thou hast a father lost.
Atar. Facetious gods!
Where is divinity?
Edam. See how he lies:
Concussion, fire and all reflection gone.
Atar. O cherished one! O dearer than the gods!
Extensive world and my little white dove.
The circle and the center of my sight.
What can be said of this? Of all the shapes
That leapt from liberal creation, thou,
King-father, wert most noble and most glorious.
How is it, by existence honored up,
And thus made spurious?
How was this rich one pauperized of life?
Edam. Thou gavest poison.
Atar. Thou art a liar always; lewd in speech.
Edam. His poisoner art thou. With all thy whims,
Devotions undevout, idolatries and songs,
Religion, politics and medicine,
Thou madest sin a potent livelihood;
And hadst our honor sink in superstition;
Hate ruled from the towers, and love left the doorways;
The day became a shadow; and the night

Fell out of bed with terror.
Atar. Oh, oh, my soul!
Edam. Oh, oh, and oh!
Now thou'rt a cipher that cries only O.
Atar. Would that my king could ope and utter O.
Edam. Of this dark liquid, in whose compressed hue
Were slumbers for a hundred nights, the drops
Were poured uncountedly. Behold what's left.
Atar. I did not this.
Edam. But thy physicians, knowing well thy treason,
Thy lust to bear a bastard government,
Did kill this country's husband for your passion;
Presented Bohanoc to earth. Much murdered
Thy father was, Ataragon. And now,
All they who touched the manner of his death
Must do communion with his turning pale.
Two days hence, thou shalt die, ambitious girl.
Our peace requires thy body for cement
Beneath its pedestal. I pity thee—
Nay, part of thee—the darling womanhood
That dies with its component villainy.
Atar. Now all is silent in the world, save this,
Become a wonder 'twixt our earth and Heaven.
We listen till we seem to hear.
Most terrible of all, no terror's mine.
My father's body, unbudged at hearing this!
How corpse breeds corpse! Behold thy deathly daughter.

(*Re-enter* CHRISTOPHER)

Chr. There is no battle; weapons disappeared.
The rebel chieftain on the hill I met.
Then did rebellion spurt its liquid rubies.
Never his lips will snarl at us again.
As mute as he, his henchmen dropped their blades,
As if they had been chopped all at the stroke;
Stood for a moment, and then fled like devils
Turned into swine, swilling their appetites
For the far-off. We kill no fugitives.
It's better that they run than fight to the death.
Edam. Observe him, Heaven with applauding thunder.

Atar. Bereft, unclouded of all artifice,
Me now behold, great Christopher.
Chr. Oft have I thee beheld, Ataragon.
Atar. The banquet of the past is cleared away;
The walls are broken, and the castle down.
Proud host was merely guest at her own table.
And yet, the wandering beggar will remember.
Lame penitence will trudge back to the music,
Hear tattling echoes of a bygone love,
Fancies of the tinkling umbrage whence she came,
And calls out for the past amid the ruins.
Not long, O Christopher, have I to live,
And drink the woeful blood of dead mistakes.
I am condemned (only two days are left,
My silver brink at black eternity)
To die.
Edam. This is a careful-gusty speech, intending
To have his heart beat like a leprichaun.
Chr. (*to Edamia*). Is't true thou art to prove this girl's mortality,
One stroke imposing for all the strokes of time,
That hath not even marred the creature yet?
Edam. The king took death from her physician's hand,
Which did her pleasure.
Atar. No; not that.
Edam. Her friends were wantons, mystics and magicians.
What was a king to them? This medicine,
Not to allay his fever but abort
The king himself as some unwelcome child
From out our wonder, was. There is he dead.
Atar. My guilt was not of guile but lack of it.
I birthed these wrongs, that, with rebounding hatred,
Now tear the mother. There was one crime truly
My own, whose victim never stood before me
Without a gift. I did bewilder him;
And still his wilderness, plowed up with cruelties,
Yielded the flowers of patience; thou didst love me.
Chr. It seems not long ago but far away
In some land for a moment seen, I loved.
Atar. Sorrow will soothe its own; desire goes out,

Leaving pure woman, and as pure as this:
Grief could not make more pure the joyous purity
That first encountered thee.

(*Enter* WINIFRED)

Win. No one has come for me. All day I hid,
Covering me with straw, near Christopher's cow,
The which a soldier killed. I've been afraid
Since morning.
Edam. The eventful hours
Have left thee far and frightened in the past.
The king being dead, Christopher, made of kings,
Having set the royal stamp upon his foes,
Is now the conspicuous prince of all this line;
And, by my holding of the interval,
Your wifehood is decreed at end. Estate
Will be provided you.
Win. Then I have dealt with royal interests;
And, though uncareful, I have learned enough
To leave with royal vigor. This perhaps
Repairs the weakness that I wept this morning.
Farewell, enchanted husband; such you were.
Chr. Sweet moment of a bitter day, farewell.
(*Exit Winifred*)
Atar. The minutes of my heart are numbering out.
With all my heavenly sins I trust the priest
For God's perfecting; and the earthly crimes
I bring to thee for benediction.
Could I to Heaven start, slipping through thy arms,
And hearing, of the world's last noise, thy voice,
Death would not be too cruel, Christopher.
Edam. She's dangerous.
For the moment, chilled with the aspect of her downfall,
She weeps repentantly. Anon, thawed out,
She'd strike at foolish hospitality.
There is no good within this government
Until her evil's out. Death hastily hers
Must be, else dead is all supremacy.
You've conquered, Christopher, on hill and heath.
There's jubilance upon our armies yonder.

Speak to Ataragon; then to your bowmen. (*Exit*)
Atar. Thou saidst goodbye to one wife; take another.
Two days are mine; and then to hear at last,
"Goodbye, my wife." Death would be languid only.
Chr. Would it not be a heavenly robbery,
Taking thee thus, bounding in at the end?
Who would come bursting the last locks of life,
Plundering the last love's honey from thy cells,
Ere the waxen statue is dressed for Paradise?
Atar. How deathly dear, pursuing me to death,
Departing there; I pale in Heaven's path;
Thou, warm with my last warmth, to life returning.
Chr. It is malevolent.
Atar. I am not frigid yet with the eternal snows
To which I sink, near Bohanoc, to realms
Where lie the azure corpses of the past.

(*Enter* GREGORIUS)

Greg. My lord, the queen is with the army, which,
And multitudes of people, call you king.
Atar. King? Word like fortune's eagle in the sky.
Chr. If I be king, I'll save Ataragon.
(*Exeunt Christopher and Gregorius*)
Atar. New life arising. Hope, come to me, hope.
Come, come. Art thou a cat, that will not come?
Black winds I hear, like moody oxen lowing.
Falls, falls the sky. The wild goose, dark beneath,
Floats on the billowy air between the clouds,
And cries for cold. Sad is the ending of it.

(*Enter two soldiers*)

F. Sold. God save thee, woman; close thine eyes.
Atar. What roughness moves thee to this tender tone?
F. Sold. We are thy executioners.
Atar. Not yet, good man; I have two days to live.
F. Sold. Our warrant and this rope do not say that.
Atar. Where's Christopher?
S. Sold. Remember; only a priest.

F. Sold. Only a priest you are to see. (*Throws black cloak over her*)
Atar. Not on my head. Good friend, not yet. Let me
Have prayers, and then I shall be a good patient.
Not so high.
(*They strangle her*)
F. Sold. She was to have a priest.
S. Sold. We'll say she had; and who'll know whether or not?
F. Sold. She will, if for this loss of ceremony,
She's lost and goes to Hell or Purgatory.
S. Sold. There she'll find many a priest. Fear not for her.
F. Sold. Then come away.
S. Sold. Look at the king. Too big!
He was a fighter and philosopher,
Yet could not understand the kittens round him,
That neither fight nor think and still they thrive.

(*Enter* EDAMIA, CHRISTOPHER *and attendants*)

Chr. What damnable exposure is there here?
Another beautiful spot abandoned suddenly
By Nature.
Edam. Love used the sword of justice for this deed.
(*Exeunt soldiers*)
Chr. How the times do rot!
Edam. Think well of this.
Chr. Option reduced to wonder! Wonder's nothing.
What things have been that we have looked upon.
Storm-tossed, we two, mid stormy leavings, rise
For mutual sight. These two are dead, and we
Are living. Life is this, and death is that.
To this there is no that; to that, no this.
Edam. There is too much of heaviness about.
Remove these broken darlings. Let the king
Be waked nine days; for him be built a hill,
That in it he be buried standing up
In all the metal, housings, warlike objects
And representation of glory. For the princess
(Rid as she was by weeping necessity)
Let three days observation hold. Proceed.

(*Exeunt attendants with bodies of Bohanoc and Ataragon*)
Chr. Life is debauchery in sight of death;
The more voluptuous the more abominable.
Thus I, a scoundrel for being now alive,
Embrace thee to a sacrificial sin,
Or mystic revel. All the mournful instincts
Would make their manner known in hottest flesh.
Thou too art grieving fiercely and with passion,
Love-glancing here, scarce risen from the slain,
Perfumed thy lips and raiment, sumptuous mourner,
Layest thou thy guilty bosom in my arms.
Edam. Guilty? God, gavest thou another curse,
To hear, in the sublimity of love,
The hideous word? Or, filled with poison, too,
Do I now hear distortion in my blood
And not my lover whispering to me, "Guilty."
Chr. 'Tis guilty to do anything, and still more guilt
In doing it well.
Edam. Go thou unto a deeper Hell
Than e'er was known to any.
Chr. Forgive this tumbled and excited soul
That it called quietude a sin.
Thine are the folding and retentive arms
That beautify the journey and the ending,
And touch the weary head with such desire
As charms away the weapons; hallows the shield;
Puts garlands on regret; makes, of known places,
All others war, and this, tranquility.
Edam. O thou! Go not but come. Come to this hell,
My heart, which you have made infernal.
I was thy constant servant, Christopher;
And with these hands did bicker the hands of Fate,
When haggard Mercy could not bear the sight.
'Twas I that sent Gregorius to attend thee
And bade him stave Sebastian. Thee I watched.
Thou art alive!
And death was indiscriminate here awhile.
Thou art alive. Thy nostrils can yet quiver.
Thy arm is widest now; and head, the proudest.
Thy cheeks are castless where the raging storms

Recoil in music; thy hair, earth's glorious banner
To me; thy mouth, the world communicative.
Chr. Edamia's lips!
Soft, crimson leeches clinging to my own.
Lifts now the impending darkness, and obstruction
Goes like the Gates of Gazza.

(*Enter* GREGORIUS *and* ABYMELIG)

Greg. Here is one that with a material message,
Begs audience of the queen.
Edam. Abymelig, what would you?
Abym. I have official emblems, documents,
Records and mysteries of the Holy Temple;
The which—Ataragon no more—'tis meet
I leave in your empowered hands; yet humbly
Request that in the public use thereof,
Respect be of the reverence once there.
Edam. Take them, Gregorius.
Abym. Behold! (*Stabs her*)
And Devil take your unproductive bones.
Chr. Cur of eternity! Burst, burst, thou cur! (*Strangles Abymelig and casts him down*)
Edam. Long wishes meet the precious hour too late.
Chr. There is no death until Edamia dies.
Edam. Farewell, my world, and in it Christopher. (*Dies*)
Chr. Farewell, inducements and things clutchable.
Edamia, Edamia, is that all?
Greg. Come, my lord; these are all of yesterday.
Sit not with them, or madness will sit with thee.
Chr. Gregorius, come not near; I'm spelled with death;
The cloudiness of it is catching all.
All they that love me and that hate do die.
Death, how thou followest me!
Greg. Ah, dying is the soldier's pleasure. Hear!
They call another Bohanoc. They call you.
Chr. They call? Who call? And who is called?
What's place to place to be thus called and answering?
Is this where I stood yesterday?
Where are the fickle shapes warmed into life

Merely to frighten with departures cold?
Who would have thought the material so untrue?
'Twas misarranged, or ill-observed. Nathless,
The scene is gone; the walls are decomposed.
On yonder hillsides, built for disappointment,
Are castles gray, transcendent window-squares,
Banners mist-laden, granite piled on granite
Abrupt from earth to sky-ascending gloom.
Greg. You lost superbly. Let him say as much
Who wins. The loss exalts; the gain degrades.
Fate sought thee for distinction, singled thee
With flaming sorrows, like a central sun;
And scorched were they who dared approach too near.
My lord, this door now opens unto duty.
Let fall the man, and walk abroad the king.
Chr. As such awhile, in darkness round our throne,
I'll wear the ebony crown, and mourn alone.

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